

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS

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1. An image forming device, comprising:

a communication unit connecting the image forming device to
an external support center via a communication line and receiving
and transmitting information by a communication with the support
center;

10 an error detecting unit detecting an error of the image forming
device;

a first warning unit controlling, when the error is detected by
the error detecting unit, an operation/display unit to display a repair
15 call activation menu thereon that indicates a defective condition of
the image forming device and enables a user to decide whether
activation of a repair call transmitting function is allowed or not;

a second warning unit controlling a warning device to produce
at least a warning sound indicating the defective condition of the
20 image forming device; and

25 a warning executing unit executing selectively one or both of
the warning control of the first warning unit and the warning control
of the second warning unit, wherein, when the defective condition of
the image forming device continues for a time, exceeding a
predetermined period, without taking any repairing action, the

warning executing unit executing either one of the warning controls of the first and second warning units or both.

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2. An image forming device, comprising:

a communication unit connecting the image forming device to an external support center via a communication line and receiving
10 and transmitting information by a communication with the support center;

an error detecting unit detecting an error of the image forming device;

a first warning unit controlling an operation/display unit to
15 display a repair call activation menu thereon that indicates a defective condition of the image forming device and causes a user to decide whether activation of a repair call transmitting function is allowed or not;

a second warning unit controlling a warning device to produce
20 at least a warning sound indicating the defective condition of the image forming device; and

a warning executing unit executing selectively one or both of the warning control of the first warning unit and the warning control of the second warning unit, wherein, when the error is detected by
25 the error detecting unit, the warning executing unit executing the

warning control of the second warning unit, and, when the defective condition of the image forming device continues for a time, exceeding a predetermined period, without taking any repairing action, the warning executing unit executing both the warning controls of the first and second warning units.

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- 10 3. An image forming device, comprising:
- 15 a communication unit connecting the image forming device to an external support center via a communication line and receiving and transmitting information by a communication with the support center;
- 20 an error detecting unit detecting an error of the image forming device;
- 25 a first warning unit controlling, when the error is detected by the error detecting unit, an operation/display unit to display a repair call activation menu thereon that indicates a defective condition of the image forming device and enables a user to decide whether activation of a repair call transmitting function is allowed or not;
- 30 a second warning unit controlling a warning device to produce at least a warning sound indicating the defective condition of the image forming device; and
- 35 a warning executing unit executing selectively one or both of

the warning control of the first warning unit and the warning control
of the second warning unit, wherein, when the error is detected by
the error detecting unit, the warning executing unit executing the
warning control of the second warning unit, and, when the defective
5 condition of the image forming device continues for a time,
exceeding a predetermined period, without taking any repairing
action, the warning executing unit executing the warning control of
the first warning unit.

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4. The image forming device according to claim 1, further
comprising a warning condition setting unit that changes initial
15 setting data, including a validity flag of the first warning unit and a
validity flag of the second warning unit, in accordance with user
demands.

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5. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the
second warning unit controls the warning device to produce any
combination of a warning sound, a synthesized voice or music, and a
25 flash light.

6. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the warning executing unit controls, when a repair call button of the repair call activation menu is depressed, the communication unit to transmit a repair call to the support center via the communication line.

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10 7. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the second warning unit and the warning executing unit are activated even when the image forming device is set in a power-saved standby mode.

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8. The image forming device according to claim 1, further comprising a warning condition setting unit that changes initial setting data, including a predetermined period value, a warning duration value, a warning interrupt duration value and the number of repeated warning attempts, in accordance with user demands.

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9. The image forming device according to claim 1, further comprising an operation restart/stop unit that stops the warning control processes of the first and second warning units during an arbitrarily set stop period and restarts the warning control processes at an end of the stop period.

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10 10. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the warning executing unit inhibits, when a cancel button of the repair call activation menu is depressed, the repair call transmitting function to transmit a repair call to the support center via the communication line.

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11. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein the warning executing unit executes the warning control of the second warning unit when the image forming device continues to be in a running state over a predetermined running period.

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12. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein
the warning executing unit executes the warning control of the
second warning unit when the image forming device continues to be
in a waiting state over a predetermined waiting period.

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13. The image forming device according to claim 1, wherein
10 the warning device includes a speaker and a built-in flash.

15 14. The image forming device according to claim 2, further
comprising a warning condition setting unit that changes initial
setting data, including a validity flag of the first warning unit and a
validity flag of the second warning unit, in accordance with user
demands.

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15. The image forming device according to claim 2, wherein
25 the warning executing unit controls, when a repair call button of the

repair call activation menu is depressed, the communication unit to transmit a repair call to the support center via the communication line.

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16. The image forming device according to claim 2, wherein
the warning executing unit inhibits, when a cancel button of the
10 repair call activation menu is depressed, the repair call transmitting
function to transmit a repair call to the support center via the
communication line.

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17. A remote monitoring system including a host computer of
a support center and an image forming device which are connected
together via a communication line, the image forming device
20 comprising:

a communication unit connecting the image forming device to
the host computer of the support center via the communication line
and receiving and transmitting information by a communication with
the host computer;

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an error detecting unit detecting an error of the image forming

device;

a first warning unit controlling, when the error is detected by the error detecting unit, an operation/display unit to display a repair call activation menu thereon that indicates a defective condition of the image forming device and enables a user to decide whether activation of a repair call transmitting function is allowed or not;

5 a second warning unit controlling a warning device to produce at least a warning sound indicating the defective condition of the image forming device; and

10 a warning executing unit executing selectively one or both of the warning control of the first warning unit and the warning control of the second warning unit, wherein, when the defective condition of the image forming device continues for a time, exceeding a predetermined period, without taking any repairing action, the 15 warning executing unit executing either one of the warning controls of the first and second warning units or both.

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18. The remote monitoring system according to claim 17, wherein the image forming device further comprises a warning condition setting unit that changes initial setting data, including a validity flag of the first warning unit and a validity flag of the 25 second warning unit, in accordance with user demands.

19. The remote monitoring system according to claim 17,
wherein the warning executing unit controls, when a repair call
button of the repair call activation menu is depressed, the
communication unit to transmit a repair call to the support center via
5 the communication line.

10 20. The remote monitoring system according to claim 17,
wherein the warning executing unit inhibits, when a cancel button of
the repair call activation menu is depressed, the repair call
transmitting function to transmit a repair call to the support center
via the communication line.

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